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Thoughts in Passing.

DISSENT ON POLICY has always been considered among the rights of the American people, and this privilege is in no way abrogated by the common interpretation of the 1964 presidential election as reflecting the "great consensus." Surely, therefore, a member of the United States Senate, and especially the chairman of the powerful Foreign Relations Committee need not apologize, as Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas did this past weekend in expressing his views on the Vietnam situation.

It would have been appropriate, however, for the Senator, who presumably knows all of the inside facts on international relations, to explain the unfortunate timing of his pronouncement. On the heels of leftist and beatnik demonstrations against policy in Vietnam which he sharply and properly denounced, his declaration that the United States should halt the bombing of North Vietnam echoes the line that has been endlessly pursued by the communist aggressors. And this, along with his denunciation of the Central Intelligence Agency which hostile nations have been accusing of serious indiscretions is the biggest assist that could have been given the violent dissenters with United States policy, the draft-card burners and all the rest.

If the CIA and the Defense Department have exerted too much influence in foreign policy (the general impression has been that the Department of State has been indulging in master-minding the military establishment) Senator Fulbright would better serve the national interest if he used his official power to bring about corrective action. This would earn him fewer headlines but at the same time provide no additional fodder for the communist propaganda mills.

Continuance of limited objectives in Vietnam can only lead to the expanding and futile sacrifice of American lives. The "police action" in Korea should have taught that lesson. And Senator Fulbright, who not many months ago publicly referred to communist Cuba as "a nuisance but not a menace," at the time stating that the communist menace, by and large, was a "myth" would do well to look at what is happening in virtually every Latin American nation, beginning with Panama and the Dominican Republic, as a result of subversion hatched in Cuba.